



Sarah Emily Rooker Muir:  
Picture taken in front of  
her Center Creek home  
about 1920



Sarah E. Muir's father:  
John Bunyon Rooker  
(April 25, 1839-Sept. 15, 1908)  
Picture taken about 1907 in  
front of John and Sarah Muir's  
log cabin home in Center Creek

1891-

state was under constant challenge and it was the persistent fight made by settlers to preserve their water rights that won the battles in those days.

As Dad put it later when praised for his bravery, "Hell, I'd seen too much sweat put into the drilling of that tunnel by my father, Jim and Andrew Lindsay, myself and brother George to see this water lost. I just wasn't letting it get away that easy."

## CHAPTER 19

### Irrigation Experiences

Although no mention is made in the early minutes of the Willow Creek Canal Company, Dad did a lot of work in the tunnel, assisting his father, George Muir.

This idea of diverting water from the Colorado River watershed into the Great Basin was first realized by the Mormon settlers at the mouth of Daniels Canyon in Heber Valley. The Willow Creek Irrigation Company was incorporated in 1891. In the articles, it states that John Lindsay Muir had 40 acres that he cultivated and watered by water brought from the Utah Indian Reservation by Willow Creek Canal Company and that he had subscribed for 150 shares worth \$150, by February 1, 1892. This was part of a homestead taken out by George Muir, Dec. 29, 1888. He divided it between sons John and George Muir.

The old minutes of the Willow Creek Canal Company show that on Feb. 27, 1892, James Lindsay was awarded the first bid of driving the tunnel from the west side and Andrew Lindsay to start on the east side. George Muir was awarded the second bid March 26, 1892 to complete the tunnel. On Feb. 6, 1893, Andrew Lindsay reported being in about 412 feet on the east end. On Dec. 16, 1893, a report on the completion of the tunnel was read and approved. The tunnel was 844 feet long. George Muir made 524 feet of the tunnel from the west side. When the two ends met the west tunnel was only a foot higher than the east tunnel, a remarkable feat for the meager engineering and transit tools available those days.

Dad was then married and starting to farm and run cattle. He assisted his father, George as often as possible during the summer of 1893 in drilling the tunnel. (George Muir had presented a claim of \$20 for rock work done on the Willow Creek Canal between the tunnel and Willow Creek for Dad and Joseph Hammer. Dad was allowed \$15 at August 25, 1894, meeting after investigation had been made. Evidently, Joe Hammer's claim was rejected.)

A committee inspection of the tunnel was made in Nov., 1899, with Dad in charge. The tunnel had caved in, shutting off the water. Dad reported the tunnel needed 1300 feet of red pine timber and 2,000 red pine laggings, 900 feet of cleaning and 90 sets of timbers set at 4 foot intervals at the bottom and 2 1/2 feet at the top. The board wanted it completed by May 15, 1900. George Muir was given the contract at \$1 per foot.



George Muir either failed himself or the persons he hired didn't do a good job because the board did not accept the work. Evidently, Dad entered into the picture and re-did much of the work for his father because on Nov. 15, 1900 the improvement in the timbering of the tunnel was completed and accepted.

Dad tells of wages paid in those days of \$1.50 per day for a single hand, \$2.50 for men and team.

Dad was elected a director of the company, March 1, 1902. He was re-elected in 1904 for a two year term. He served off and on for years, re-elected Feb. 5, 1924 and was made vice-president.

He was re-elected in 1926 and 1927, 1929, and 1931 through 1934. He worked hard for the irrigation interests of the farmers

He worked both the Willow Creek and Strawberry canal companies. It was under both the Daniels Irrigation Company in 1922 when combined later changed to the Daniels Irrigation Companies. Troubles arose with the Strawberry and Daniels Creek companies in fighting for and preserving the Strawberry Reservoir was built in fighting for and preserving their small water right for use of the Willow Creek and Strawberry water. He also worked for the building of reservoirs on the Provo River headwaters but they eventually sold the sites.

He was elected again a director in 1937 through 1939. The history of the Willow Creek Strawberry and Daniels Irrigation Companies finds Dad's name, work and sound advice mentioned many times. For example, when the Strawberry Reservoir Company was organized and began competition for the use of the Willow Creek water, they made strenuous efforts to wrest this water from the Daniels Irrigation Company. Dad, then a director, warned against the Daniels Co. ever starting a suit with the Strawberry Reservoir Company because this would give the Strawberry Company a chance to allot what amount of water they would give the Daniels Irrigation Company and pin the Daniels Company down as to when they could use the water.

## CHAPTER 20

### Other Irrigation and Water Experiences

Dad owned thirteen acres at the home place in Center Creek. He had bought it from Al Rhoades. The Center Creek Irrigation Company was formed to regulate the flow of the stream. Dad served for several years on the board of directors of this company and was in on the planning and decisions to build the reservoirs up Center Creek to increase the conservation of water and improve the water situation for the Center Creek farmers.

These reservoirs were perhaps the first storage dams built in Utah. At least among the first. It was an important contribution to the development of the many storage reservoirs throughout Utah and the st.

About 1915, the folks in Center Creek decided to put in a water pipeline to serve each home. A big spring at the head of the little

town on Clydes Ranch was secured as the source, a cement box or house built around it, the pipe laid into town and to each house and corral. Dad soon piped the water into the house, and mother had running water in a sink. One of the earliest automatic washing machines was the one operated by use of the force of the tap water running through an enclosed paddle wheel which propelled a belt to turn the washing machine and agitate the clothes. It was a real improvement over the old hand pumping machine.

Giving public service to the irrigation company was but a part of the irrigation story to any farmer in Heber Valley.

Dad and his boys spent about as many hours irrigating as in doing most of the other work required on the farm. This so necessary life-blood of agriculture had to be nursed and taken care of to the last drop.

The soil at the old George Muir homestead one and one-half miles west of Center Creek was underlaid with rock and gravel. He was constantly picking up rocks and packing them off the land. Thus, with the gravelly undersurface, the manner of irrigation had to be such in that the water would not run too long and be lost in sinking away in the gravel below. Also, the stream of water received may vary with the season and amount in the canals. So, all in all, irrigation was a round the clock job. Dad would wield the shovel all day, watching the water, making changes, digging little ditches and dams to lead water to high spots and doing all he could to put the water to use. At night, he would take one or two hour naps, then roll out to make changes or "turns" as they were called. It was considered evil to let any waste water get away. But quite often it did and each farmer along the way would be alert to divert waste waters from the farms above and put it to use on his farm.

### Stealing Water - "A Mormon Profession"

Of all the stories and humorous gaffaws of the art of stealing water, Dad was the hero of a very amusing yet serious event.

The mailman of Daniels and Center Creeks was a man by the name of Alma Duke. True to Heber customs he was nicknamed "Dude" Duke. He owned a farm right above Dad's between Daniels and Center. Daily, as he would round this country road with his horse and buggy delivering the mail, Dude would stop off to tend to chores or water turns on his own farm. He never had enough water, or mismanaged it so that he was always short. Consequently, he was suspected and caught misappropriating water from other farmers down stream. As their water flowed past his place, he was tempted to lift his headgate just a bit to allow some water to run onto his place.

After putting up with this for years and with both good natured and stern warnings, Dad would still find some of his water diverted by Dude. One night Dad saw Dude drive by in his buggy toward his farm. Sensing the usual trick, Dad walked up the canal to where Duke's headgate diverted water to the Duke farm. He found Dude down in the ditch raising the boards to filch a bit of water for the night. Not